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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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SLAUGHTER, TURNER CALL FOR PERMANENT HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. Jim Turner (D-TX), Ranking Member of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, and U.S. Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY28), Ranking Member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Rules, today announced their support for a bipartisan plan to create a permanent Committee on Homeland Security. They joined Homeland Security Committee Chair Chris Cox and other Committee members in submitting the plan today to the House Rules Committee.

"The terror attacks of September 11 transformed our nation as well as the way that Congress does business," said Rep. Slaughter. "Addressing our homeland security needs requires making bold changes and shedding ideas of the past. One of the greatest changes we have already made is creating the Department of Homeland Security. Our next, critical step is to create a permanent committee and give it full oversight authority of the Department of Homeland Security."

"We are at a critical juncture. If we are truly serious about increasing security and better protecting our communities, we must give Congress this power. Our plan has near unanimous support from our Democratic colleagues on the Homeland Security Committee and virtually every independent security expert, including the 9/11 Commission. We all know it will not be easy, but we also know it is absolutely essential. As a member of both the Select Committee on Homeland Security and the House Rules Committee, I will fight to make sure that when we return next session, we will return with the powers to get our job done."

"Homeland Security Committee Democrats are nearly unanimous in their support for the permanence of this Committee," said Rep. Turner. "Outside experts, including the 9-11 Commission, reached this conclusion long ago. Over the past two years, Democrats have identified numerous security gaps in our nation's security. To close these gaps, Congress must have a single committee with strong authorities."

"Congress ordered the largest reorganization of government when it created the Department of Homeland Security. Now, Congress must show that it takes the protection of this country seriously by establishing a permanent committee to assist this new Department in keeping this country safe from another terrorist attack. Anything less than that, and Congress will not be fulfilling its duty to the American people."

Committee members recommend creating a permanent, standing Homeland Security Committee with 29 members. The Committee would have jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security, border security, transportation security, information sharing, terrorism threat warnings, and local preparedness.

The 9/11 Commission Report strongly recommends improving congressional oversight over homeland security activities: "Of all our recommendations, strengthening congressional oversight may be among the most difficult and important. So long as oversight is governed by current congressional rules and resolutions, we believe the American people will not get the security they want and need. The United States needs a strong, stable, and capable congressional committee structure to give America's national intelligence agencies oversight, support, and leadership."

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